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ABSTRACT

Krashen's (1981) second language learning monitor model and Labov's (1978) first language acquisition monitor model are compared, and it is concluded that monitoring is not an all-or-nothing phenomenon, but is variable. It is also suggested that the ability to monitor in formal language styles may improve accuracy in less formal styles, based on existing research. More research is recommended to discover whether nonnative speaker styles stratify as clearly as do Labov's native speaker styles. It is suggested that Labov's monitor model is a more accurate representation of the process than Krashen's, giving these pedagogical implications: learning activities have a legitimate place in the foreign language syllabus; and the social situation of speaking can affect students' accuracy, causing use and even overuse of the monitor in class. It is noted that despite the superiority of Labov's model in this respect, Krashen's acquisition-learning distinction, and the resulting mix of activities, is important in the language classroom. (MSE)

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MONITORING AND THE MONITOR MODEL: LABOV VERSUS KRASHEN*

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What are the most effective ESL classroom activities? This is the question all the various teaching methods have tried to answer. It is perhaps the central question of the TESL profession. Krashen (1981) proposes a way of judging the effectiveness of classroom activities based on a psycholinguistic theory called the Monitor Model. Stevick (1981:270) has called the central claim of this model "potentially the most fruitful concept for language teachers to come out of the linguistics sciences during my professional lifetime."

Krashen divides classroom activities into two kinds: acquisition activities and learning activies. Acquisition activities expose the student to comprehensible samples of the target language. They include playing games, listening to lectures, responding to commands, reading comprehensible materials, and so on. Learning activities, on the other hand, focus on a particular language form like tag questions or the phoneme /a/. Learning activities include error corrections, mechanical drills and grammar explanations. Acquistion activities might be engaged in by someone acquiring a language naturally, without a teacher. Learning activities, however, require a teacher and often a textbook. The Monitor Model claims that learning activities are only marginally helpful to the student. Acquisition activities are the basic mechanism of internalizing a language.

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A version of this paper was presented at the WATESOL Convention at George Mason University on October 1, 1982. It was part of a panel entitled "Current Applied Research in the Four Skills." The writer appeals to the results of the following in this volume by Mary Ciske in supporting his interpretation of the Monitor Model.

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Before describing the Monitor Model in detail, let us examine the evidence that supports it. Although Krashen finds indirect support for his model in many areas of second language research, the most direct evidence comes from morpheme acquisition studies such as Dulay and Burt (1974) and Bailey, Madden and Krashen (1974). Dulay and Burt examined how children acquired fourteen grammatical morphemes such as progressive -ing, the prepositions in and on, the regular past tense -ed, and so on. Surprisingly, they found that the order of difficulty of these morphemes was about the same for both Chinese-speaking children and Spanish-speaking children. Bailey, Madden and Krashen applied Dulay and Burt's method to the study of adults and found the same order of difficulty for Spanish speakers as for non-Spanish speakers from various language backgrounds.

The unexpected similarity in the orders of morpheme difficulty for speakers from different language backgrounds suggests that there are universals in language acquisition and that second language acquisition is in some ways similar to first language acquisition. In a subsequent morpheme study, however, Larsen-Freeman (1975) discovered some possible counterevidence to the universal order of difficulty hypothesis. On three of her tests, Listening, Reading and Writing, the rank order of morpheme difficulty was different from the order found by the previous researchers. To explain this discrepency, Krashen looked at the mature of the elicitation instruments used in the different studies. Dulay and Burt and Bailey, Madden and Krashen elicited their data with the bilingual Syntax Measure, which requires subjects to answer questions orally about a series of pictures, and thus elicits relatively spontaneous and natural speech. Larsen-Freeman, on the other hand, used a paper and pencil grammar test, where, for example, the subjects had to fill in the blanks in a story context. Krashen speculates that the two kinds of elicitation instruments tap two different linguistic abilities: the BSM taps basic linguistic competence, but paper and pencil tests, where the subject has plenty of time to think about the correct answer, tap a grammatical problem-solving ability. He suggests that these two abilities stem from two separate internal systems of linguistic rules, which can interact in the following way: when there is enough time, the conscious, "problem-solving" rules can impose themselves on the unconscious basic

competence rules and alter what the subject says or writes. This situation is illustrated in Figure 1.

According to the Monitor Model in Figure 1, all second language performance is initiated by the basic rules of competence found in box 1 (except in the very early states when speakers may laboriously plan each utterance using the problem-solving rules in box 2, which is called the Monitor). In later states of second language performance, the rules in the Monitor box are used only to modify the basic language structures produced in the competence box. Thus, a subject might have no rule for third person singular -s in box 1 and would, therefore, never produce this morpheme in speech. However, the subject might have this rule in box 2 and so would be able to produce the form on a paper and pencil grammar test. The Monitor rules can only be used when there is enough time to stop and figure out the correct forms. Thus they cannot be used in speech except perhaps when the first sentence of a discourse is planned out in advance. Krashen suggests that linguistic knowledge gets into boxes 1 and 2 in entirely different ways. Basic linguistic competence is "acquired" through exposure to a second language in meaningful contexts. Monitoring ability is "learned" through error correction, drill, grammatical explanation, and so on. Furthermore, only a particular kind of rule can be learned, namely a rule that is easy to remember and to apply--subject-verb agreement might be one example. Many linguistic rules, however, are so complicated that they are unlearnable, for example, those governing English prepositions. These rules must be acquired.

Krashen (1978a.:319) states that the idea of Monitoring comes from William Labov's (1978) studies of variation in first language speech, and he suggests that monitoring is similar in first and second language production.

The Monitor Model is attractive in many ways. It suggests, correctly I think, that second language acquisition is basically similar to first language acquisition, and that given motivation and freedom from fear of making errors, adults --like children--can acquire a language naturally and enjoyably. The Monitor Model emphasizes meaningful language use, not artificial and awkward exercises and drills (although in a way this is bad news for teachers for, as Krashen notes, natural and meaningful language activities are much harder to

dream up than the old fill-in-the-blanks exercises). But before endorsing the Monitor Model without reservation, I would like to pursue Krashen's comparison of his Monitor Model with the model of monitoring in first language speech described by Labov.

Like Krashen, Labov developed a theory of monitoring after observing variation in linguistic performance. Labov noticed, for example, that speakers of Black English sometimes produce standard English forms. Thus, a BE speaker might sometimes say,

(1) He be late everyday.

And sometimes,

(2) He is late everyday.

Like Krashen, Labov was able to correlate different linguistic forms with the different circumstances in which they are produced. Thus, (2) would be more likely in an informal situation. Labov theorized that when speakers pay more attention to the form of their speech, they are able to shift their style of speaking to a more formal one. Labov called style shifting in the direction of more "correct" speech monitoring. An example of monitoring is found in Figure 2, which describes New Yorker's use of (r) following a vowel. In casual speech New Yorkers tend to delete (r), so four is pronounced (foa), and floor is pronounced (floa). When New Yorkers monitor their speech, they pronounce (r) more often.

Labov's monitor model differs in an important respect from Krashen's monitor model. Krashen's model says that monitoring is a conscious "problem-solving" process in which speakers deliberately apply a grammar rule. But Labov's model implies that, although monitoring is sometimes conscious as when speakers read a list of minimal pairs, it can also be an unconscious "feel for correctness." This second kind of monitoring is what happens in the "careful speech" style of Figure 2, where speakers have little time to think about how to pronounce a particular word, yet do manage to supply more (r)s than in their casual speech. In fact, Labov's model implies that it is impossible to draw the line between conscious and unconscious monitoring. For example, in the "reading style" of Figure 2 some altering of form in the direction of "correctness"takes place, but is it conscious or unconscious? Well, neither

one. It seems there is not a clear demarcation between the conscious "problem-solving" kind of monitoring and the unconscious "feel for correctness" kind. In Labov's model, monitoring is not like an on-off switch. Rather, it is like a rheostat that can be turned up or down. Labov's definition of monitoring, "attention paid to the form of speech," seems to describe this phenomon very well. One can pay more or less attention to form depending on the circumstances. Smith (1981) describes this situation as follows:

> The word attention ... sometimes implies conscious knowledge and sometimes not...Attention simply means a kind of orientation, concentration, or focus. If we successfully drive our car we have presumably "attended" to that action, we were focused upon it, but not in the sense that we were consciously aware of what we were doing. If we are engrossed in what we are doing, it is only afterwards that we can remove ourselves from the situation and say what we have done.

If Krashen's model allowed only for altering the form of speech on the basis of conscious monitoring, it would be incomplete, for second language speakers report that they can alter form on the basis of a "feel for correctness," as Krashen acknowledges. According to Beebe (1980), Krashen calls this phenomenon monitoring (with a small m) as opposed to conscious Monitoring with a capital M. Thus, monitoring is an unconscious altering of linguistic form in the direction of correctness; it is presumably acquired, not learned. The addition of monitoring to Krashen's theory requires that Figure 1 be amended to include a monitor box, as shown in Figure 3.

A basic difference between Krashen and Labov's monitor models, then, is Krashen's absolute distinction between conscious and unconscious monitoring. This distinction seems unnatural to me because it requires speakers to carry around in their heads two sets of linguistic rules which can never merge, and also because it implies that monitoring in second language speech is different from monitoring in first language speech. Furthermore, the claim that learning cannot become acquisition implies that since the ability to Monitor is useful only in tasks like grammar tests, and, perhaps, writing assignments. As Krashen (1976:32) says,

> "Whatever ... the contribution (of learning) to second langaguie performance, the Monitor Model predicts that it is in one domain only, as a conscious Monitor."

But it is far from clear that learning activities cannot contribute to basic competence, and Labov's monitor model implies that they can to a limited extent. For example, Labov's (1978:36) description of the role of correction in second dialect acquisition may apply to second language acquisition as well.

> Overt correction applied in the schoolroom is useful to the student in that it makes him aware of the distance between his speech and the standard language in grammar and pronunciation. This correction cannot in itself teach him a new categorical rule; it most often gives him a variable rule which he will use in formal situations.

A pilot study on monitoring performed by my colleague Mary Ciske (see in this volume) elicited four contextual styles of English from a Korean student Kim, who was enrolled in a class in freshman composition for foreign students. Kim was asked to respond to the question, "How does the U.S. differ from what you had expected?" in four ways: free writing, reading the free writing sample, conversation, and correcting the free writing sample. Ciske then scored the various speech and writing samples for accuracy in obligatory contexts of subject-verb agreement, regular past tense and prepositions. The results are displayed in Figure 4.

The contextual styles in Figure 4 are ordered from least to most formal along the X axis. The order is: free writing, reading the free writing sample, conversation, editing the free writing sample. Obviously the edited written style is the most monitored, but what is the justification for the rest of the oredering? It has often been observed (for example by Bartholomae, 1980) that second language and second dialect speakers are able to monitor what they have written by reading it aloud. Thus, reading a free writing sample is more formal that writing it. For many acquirers conversation, even with a relative stranger and with a tape recorder present, may be a less formal style than free writing, but I do not think that this is the case for Kim. Kim had been trained (by me) in free writing throughout a semester and had learned very well to ignore form in favor of content in this kind of exercise. Also, he did not expect that his freewriting would be marked for accuracy. But in the conversational style Ciske reports that Kim "definitely wanted to impress me. He often stopped and self-corrected." Thus, I think that the ordering of contextual styles in Figure 4 is correct for this subject.

The greatest changes in the accuracy of Kim's English occur between the speaking style and the edited writing style. By monitoring Kim was able to improve significantly the accuracy of subject-verb agreement ($p < .01$) and regular past tense ($p < .001$). On the other hand, the accuracy of preposition usage is significantly lower in the more monitored style ($p < .05$). The Monitor model nicely explains these results since subject-verb agreement involves at least some "learnable" rules, rules that are easy to remember and to apply. Obviously, Kim can apply these rules to advantage. On the other hand, preposition usage is a mare's nest of irregularity. According to Krashen, the rules of prepositon usage cannot be learned; they must be acquired. Thus, monitoring is not helpful for prepositions and when Kim attempts to monitor these rules, his accuracy goes down.

The conclusion of this paper is that monitoring is not an all or nothing, but rather a variable phenomenon, and that the ability to monitor in formal styles may "pull up" accuracy in less formal styles. Ciske's experiment is inconclusive but suggestive regarding this hypothesis. The only test case of the hypothesis in Figure 4 is with subject-verb agreement. Here Kim can successfully monitor in the most formal style. Does this ability "pull up" the less formal styles? There is not much difference in accuracy in the less formal styles, but accuracy does improve somewhat as Kim moves from less to more formal. More research is obviously needed to show that non-native speaker styles stratify as nicely as Labov's native speaker styles do, but Figure 4 does suggest that for Kim monitoring is not an all or nothing phenomenon.

If Labov's monitor model is a more accurate representation of the facts than Krashen's, one implication for teaching is that learning activities have a legitimate place in our syllabi. A second implication is that the social situation of speaking can affect our student's accuracy. Many second language speakers, like the New Yorkers, will be more "correct" in formal speaking situations than in informal ones. This is a phenomenon many language teachers have noticed: the students sound great in class, accurately using, for example, the past tense, but just outside the classroom door we hear, "Hey, where you go last night?" However, we must not assume that students will

automatically speak better in class than out of class. The monitor can be overused, as Krashen makes very clear. Monitor overusers are insecure about their speech, and therefore hesitant and sometimes even paralysed. Linguistic insecurity in formal situations occurs with native speakers as well as with non-natives. For example, Labov (1978:25) observes, "The norms for pronouncing vase and aunt are now shifting, so that many people are baffled and embarrassed when they encounter these words in a text to be read aloud." By its nature a conversation class will elicit a more monitored speech style from students. If the class is conducted in a friendly and non-threatening way, students will have the opportunity to become, in Krashen's term, "optimal monitor users." However, if too much overt correction is made and the students feel insecure, they will say very little, accurately or otherwise.

Having suggested why I think Labov's monitor model is in one respect better than Krashen's, let me emphasize that Krashen's basic insight, the acquisition-learning distinction, is still most important. In my view, learning activities, though helpful, are not essential and are still very much secondary to learning-acquisition activities. Perhaps a good rule of thumb for the learning-acquisition mix is one suggested by Paulston and Bruder (1976) in a slightly different context: learning activities should be both present and brief.

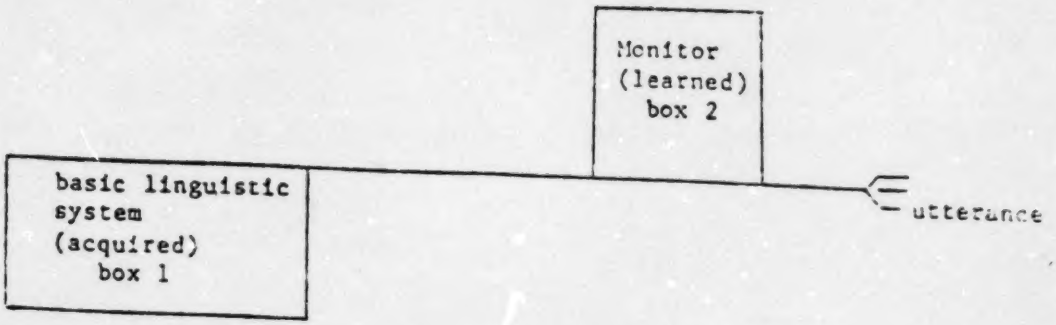

Figure 1 Basic version of the Monitor Model (adapted from Krashen, 1978)

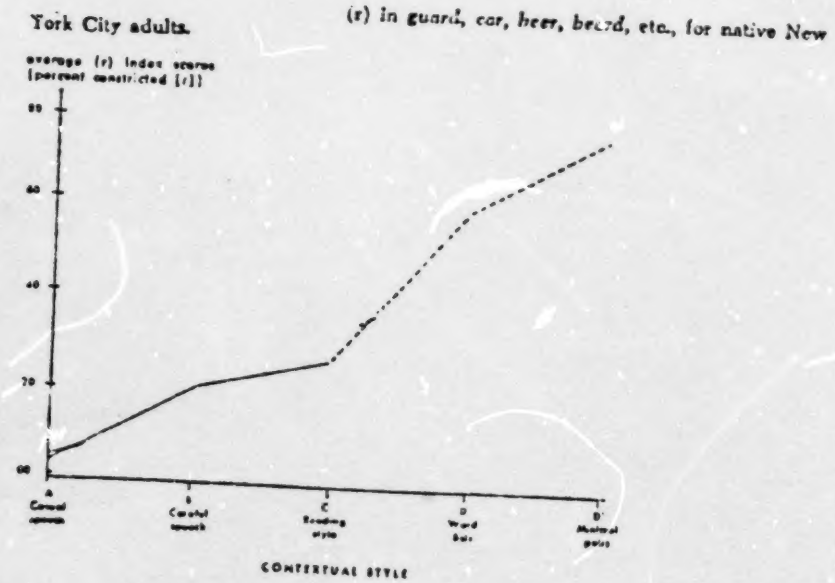

Figure 2 Style stratification of [r] for New York City adults

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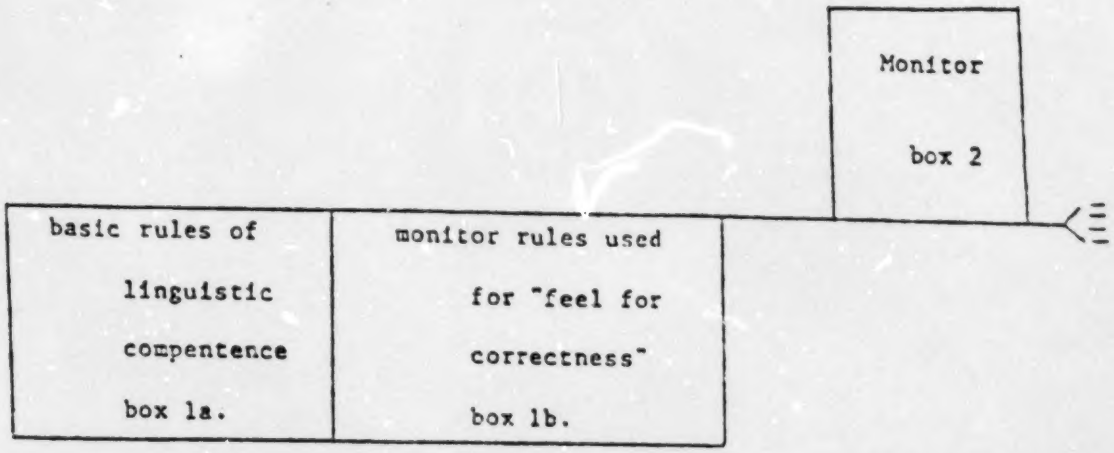

Figure 3 The Monitor Model expanded to account for unconscious monitoring

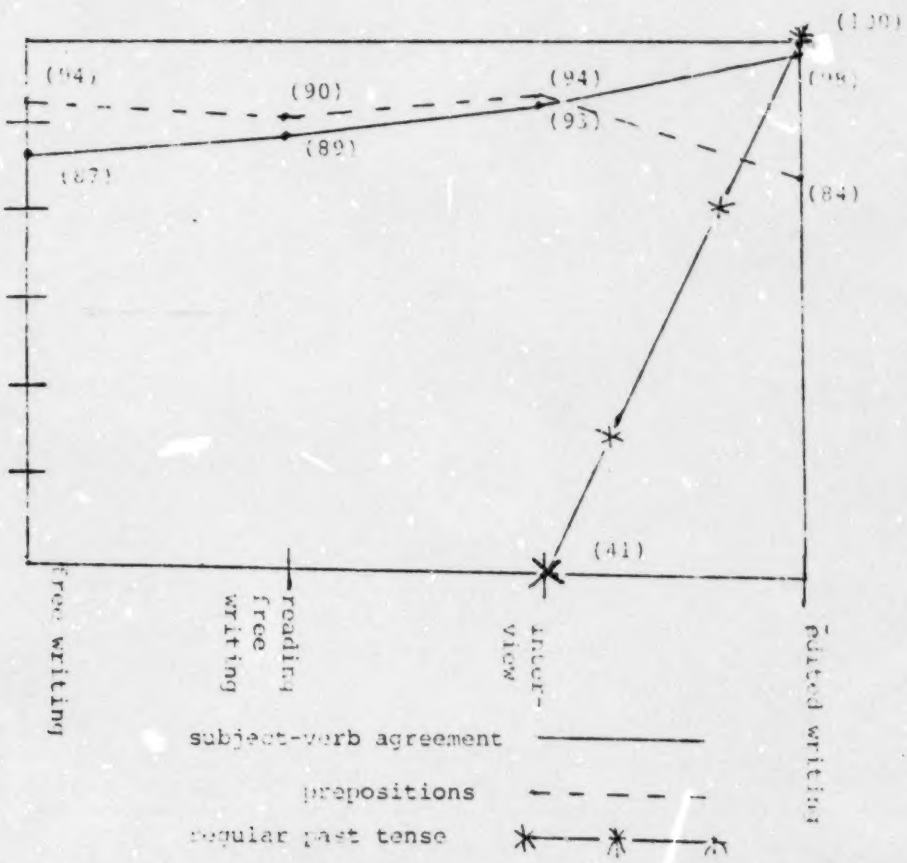

Figure 4 Monitoring in four styles

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